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Interview with George A. Harding
Conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson and Miss Randy Sue Thompson

Conducted on June 26, 1979
TAPE #1

DODSON: Now I wonder Mr. Harding if you'd tell us your full name and tell us how long you've lived in the valley?

HARDING: Well, I can do that right off the bat. My full name is George Arthur Harding. Do you want to put that down some place?

DODSON: It's going here.

HARDING: And I've lived in the valley since 1914, 13 or 14.

DODSON: Did you go to school in the valley then?

HARDING: No, I got my education in Colorado. I was going to the Colorado ? college as a boy and then I came out here and after I came out here I had to just have thirty-five other units of work before they would accept me and my credentials. So I went to school out here in Upland and Santa Barbara. Took 35 units of work.

DODSON: Are you from Fort Collins then?

HARDING: Yes, it's my home town.

DODSON: Have you ever been in a little town named Colorado Springs?

HARDING: Yes I have many times. That's where I am from.

DODSON: Is that right? Didn't know we were two Coloradians here.

HARDING: Right next to the mountains.

THOMPSON: Camaraderie.

HARDING: I have a niece that lives in Colorado Springs now. She runs a nursery...a child nursery. Young kids. Her husband had something to do with a big dairy. Now, I can't tell you what it was.

DODSON: We had one by the name of Sitton. If that rings a bell.

HARDING: No it doesn't. That's where ?

DODSON: What caused you to leave Colorado and come to California?

HARDING: I got married.

DODSON: Well, that could be a good reason for moving most anywhere. Was your wife a Californian then.

HARDING: No, no. We were both from Colorado. She was from Eden, Colorado. That place is not far from Denver. Eden is north of ? We were married there and she had a teaching job in Los Angeles in Sanford, Arizona. So she came to Sanford, Arizona and taught for nine months there and I stayed in Colorado and came out after her school term was over. And we've lived there ever since. That was in 1914. We were married in 1913.

DODSON: Well, I had a reason for coming. I just don't like the cold winters in Colorado.

HARDING: You'd like to have some of it now, wouldn't you?

DODSON: No. I've known it to go 27 below 0 in Colorado Springs.

HARDING: I've had it 40 below 0 in Fort Collins, Colorado.

DODSON: But you should have left even faster than I did then.

HARDING: I left the 14th of December, I believe it was and there was 4 feet of snow on level on the ground in Fort Collins, Colorado. Pastured out cattle from the south. ? Herds of them...? The snow was so deep that we had to go out and break it away for the cows to get through to feed them. You could just see the top of the fence posts.

DODSON: Is that right? Well, how do you feel about snow now? Are you a person that misses it?

HARDING: I don't miss it. I like to see it.

DODSON: I think that's true of most of us that were raised around it. We don't go to the snow like people here. We had too much of it anyway.

HARDING: Even the kids don't. I guess they heard the old folks talk about it so much that they're getting sick and tired of hearing about snow. ? up in the mountains ? when they were young.

DODSON: When you moved to California you came from Arizona directly then.

HARDING: From, what I'd say, Sanford, Arizona.

DODSON: Did you move at once to the valley or some other part of Los Angeles?

HARDING: The valley.

DODSON: What was it like when you came here?

HARDING: Oh, it was just an old hillside town. In other words, there wasn't very much. There was very few paved streets in the town of Van Nuys. Just the main street down through Van Nuys was paved and the streets were not paved. We had sidewalks. But the dust was about 6 inches deep all over the town. And you'd go away for the weekend and come back and shovel it out of your house because we had those winds you know. Lots of heavy winds.

DODSON: That's what I understand. That we had terrible dust storms in the valley in the early days. Now I guess that all the building has ended that and we probably don't have the ground turned up for agricultural.

HARDING: The trees have ended it too.

DODSON: The two together.

HARDING: The trees have stopped all that wind. We get wind here. A lot more wind than we do in Van Nuys. It comes from the northern east, right through the canyon over here and right down through...?

THOMPSON: Wasn't there very many trees when you first came out here?

HARDING: Oh, it was like desert. In other words, it was a farming district. They raised lots of barley and this was all farm land and big tracks ? 400 or 500 or 600 acres and ? brush the top of the ground and plant their grain and the rains would come and ? And that was in this particular part of the ground. But farther down toward Los Angeles there was lots of fruit. Apricots, peaches. Had it dryer down there in Van Nuys. ?

DODSON: Even before that I understand there was quite a bit of wheat growing down there. But that I guess was gone by the time you came.

HARDING: Wheat. Their crop was barley, not wheat.

DODSON: Well, when Lankershim first came in he planted wheat and of course most people thought wheat wouldn't grow in Southern California but he did quite a bit with

it. But then he sub-divided and the wheat growing stopped. So I imagine there was no wheat growing at all by the time you came.

HARDING: Well, you could see the big truck loads of barley going down on the boulevard there. You could see Lankershim Boulevard for about as far as the pavement use go there you see.

DODSON: What sort of work were you in when you first came to the valley?

HARDING: I wasn't working. I was crippled. I was crippled man when I first came here. I was a farmer boy then and we set sheep on the place. I had to haul the hey to the pens and unluckily upset the load of hey and I was taken to the sheep pens. We had to go down through a creek bed and up the other side in order for me not to get buried in the load of hey I had to run to the top of hey. I had to cross this wagon wheel and injured my back. And I was that way for about three to four years. When we were married I was still crippled. I got over that and then I got my education in California and started teaching school. I had a little shop in Van Nuys. A little handicraft shop you might call it. Buy a pound of

solder and pay the rent with it. It sounds kind of funny, doesn't it?

DODSON: Well, that depends on how you use that solder.

HARDING: You use it to patch things and people would come in and ask for repair. Well, the utensils in that day and age were very necessary for the people that just couldn't step out and buy them. I had copper ? and boilers and copper this and copper that, pans and skillets and what not that they had a hole in it and they'd bring them in, "Can you fix this?" Sure, I'll fix it.

THOMPSON: Where was your shop located?

HARDING: It was on Van Nuys Blvd., right across from California Bank. Not now. It was California Bank that I'm speaking about is right on the corner. It's where the old Army goods place is there now. That was California Bank on that corner. I was right across the street from that. And the woman's name was Mrs. Keith that use to run or owned the place that I rented. I paid \$15.00 a month rent to that place.

DODSON: Is that right. Is that location across from the present Civic Center down there now?

HARDING: It's the other side of it. It's on the west side. And then the Civic Center is on the east side.

DODSON: I think I know about where it would be then.

HARDING: It's just about the middle of the town. ? I can't think of the name of the town. Van Nuys.

DODSON: I think there's one of the original buildings that was there when you were there. It's still there now. That Van Nuys hotel down there. Do you remember that as a hotel? Were you ever in it?

HARDING: Oh yeah, sure.

DODSON: What sort of a place was it when you were there?

HARDING: There was just a few rooms. That's all there was to it. It was not very much of a hotel. It never was very popular. It was just a place for over night, you might say. Then the Post Office you see was right there by it, between there, that hotel and downtown.

DODSON: So that was not a place that people went to for formal dinners and that sort of thing. Very second rate. I think it still is.

HARDING: No. Same thing. People who hang out really now ? I guess there's fellas that go in there and pay maybe a dollar a night or something to stay there.

DODSON: Well, I think you were the first person that knew anything about it. And that's why I've been anxious to ask you about it. Your impressions of what it was like.

HARDING: The fella that owned the shop right next to it on the east. His name was Bill Weiss. He was a German boy and he did battery work and tires and automobile tires. He ran that place for many years, Bill Weiss. And his son is in there now. He was the last I ever heard. For a long time.

DODSON: I think that's probably the only one of the original buildings that's still there, isn't it?

HARDING: It is, in that vicinity.

DODSON: Yeah. That's what I meant, in that vicinity.

HARDING: You go on down the street from that and they got the bank that's on the corner down there on...it use to be on the east side of the street. ? Valley National, is that what they call it?

DODSON: I'm not sure. Do you know Randy?

THOMPSON: Valley Federal?

HARDING: Federal, it might be called that now. They offered to sell me that corner one time. If I would pay the interest on the mortgage.

DODSON: Well, people that got here in 1913, if they could have held on to there land...of course they'd be multi-millionaires now. But no one can foresee what will happen.

HARDING: We built our home in Van Nuys after we rented homes for I guess about five months. My wife was teaching there. She had got a job of teaching in the Van Nuys Elementary School. And we lived in a garage until we got the house started. And we built that home on Gilmore Street in 1917. We paid \$400 for the lot and the house cost us about \$4,000. It was 6, 7 rooms.

DODSON: Is that house still standing?

HARDING: Yes, it is.

DODSON: Do you know it's street address? I'd like to record that.

HARDING: 14622 Gilmore Street.

DODSON: Well, we're glad to know that because we have been trying to find out the location of some of the old houses in the Van Nuys area.

HARDING: Well, that was an old one. Well kept and it was really a nice home.

DODSON: Does it have pretty much it's original appearance now or has it been...

HARDING: Yes it did. It is well kept all the time. And we sold it not too long ago. I had a new roof put on and it's been painting. It looks like new. It was in good shape.

DODSON: Well, we're glad to know about that. Because I say, we are trying to locate the older houses in Van Nuys.

HARDING: You know if you get a hold of a man named Sy Lyndon. Maybe you've got him on your list some place.

DODSON: No we haven't.

HARDING: His name is Sy Lyndon. He's one of the old timers in the Valley there and he'd come in from North Hollywood. It's S-y L-y-n-d-o-n.

THOMPSON: Man, he's not here now.

HARDING: I know it he's in the telephone directory.

THOMPSON: He's not that old. He's only 70 something.

HARDING: You'd be surprised. Well, he born over there on Lankershim in that old ? and he moved from Lankershim into Van Nuys and started up a feed mill on Reseda Blvd. and sold all kinds of feed for animals. Chickens and what not.

DODSON: So he would know quite a bit about the history of the valley?

HARDING: Oh, he would know everybody in the country. Growers would deliver feed you see. And he'd be an interesting man to talk to because he knew everybody.

DODSON: Well, we're glad to get his name.

HARDING: L-y-n-d-o-n. He's the only one in the phone directory that has Lyndon. The others were Lindon.

THOMPSON: That way you can differentiate.

HARDING: He use be on ? Van Nuys. He use to be there all the time. But he sold his house down there in Van Nuys not too long ago and moved up to some place on Ridge Road over - Ridge Road towards Ventura.

DODSON: He's not living in the Valley now then?

HARDING: No, he's not living in the Valley now but he knows the story.

DODSON: What sort of social life did you have in the Valley when you first moved here?

HARDING: We had the same as we have now. The churches and lodges and what not. We were members of the Methodist church. I still hold a membership in the Methodist church we're at now.

DODSON: I imagine it's grown a great deal, hasn't it?

HARDING: Actually no. It's the other way.

DODSON: Is that right?

HARDING: We were going to church there before we moved away from there. Not that we moved away that caused all the disturbance but the church went down, down to maybe 250 or 300 members and it was up about 1500, or 1800.

DODSON: Is that right?

HARDING: That's right. And that's still down.

THOMPSON: We heard you had something to do with the Girl Scout troop.

HARDING: My wife was into the Girl Scouts. Campfire girls.

THOMPSON: First Campfire Troop.

HARDING: I had the boy scouts. I had Troop One for seven years.

THOMPSON: The first troop out here?

HARDING: Yeah, it was the first troop in the Van Nuys district.

DODSON: Well, that's interesting then. If you and your wife were both pioneers in those movements.

HARDING: I had the only scout organization in the Valley that had older boys in it. I had seven boys in that troop that were over 18 years old. If you find another troop in the Valley that's got anywhere near that...

DODSON: Oh, is that right?

HARDING: Yeah, he was in my scout troop.

DODSON: Sam Pettit is the husband of Mrs. Pettit. And I think you've met Randy. We know the Pettit's. They're members of our Museum Association. And I know that they are old timers. Mrs. Pettit is the daughter of Frank Keffer, who founded of the Valley News.

HARDING: And she had one brother, George Keffer.

DODSON: I see. I have never met her brother.

HARDING: He's in San Francisco I believe in the banking business.

DODSON: I think she graduated from Van Nuys High School about 1923. I'm not quite sure of the year. That's about right then. So you knew them then when...

HARDING: Sam was in my boy scout troop. And I think the girl. She was in Prudence's, my wife's girl scout troop. Mary Jane in Prudence's group. Whitney.

DODSON: Was he one of the founders of Van Nuys?

HARDING: Oh no, no. He was one of the people who lived there.

DODSON: I know Whitsett was important but there's another man who's name is very much like Whitsett who also was Whitley.

HARDING: He use to own that property down south of Van Nuys where the ? was. He owned that property ?

DODSON: Did you ever happen to meet Cornell J.B. Lankershim? I imagine that he was still around.

HARDING: ? He opened up some of that property around Van Nuys, south of Van Nuys and down towards your mountains. He opened it up and gave lots away down in there. ? About his friends. I was talking about Lloyd Gilbert. Lloyd Gilbert is one of the fellas. He's

an old timer but he's gone. Mrs. Gilbert's still alive. She is 95 or 96 or 97.

DODSON: Does she live here in the Valley?

HARDING: Her name would be Eva Gilbert.

DODSON: You don't happen to know about where she lives.

HARDING: Down south of Van Nuys about...you know where the big Van Nuys district...where the big school was that they tore down on about 5, 6, 7 blocks south of Van Nuys.

DODSON: Is that the high school?

HARDING: Well, no, it was an old...I think it was a religious school of some kind, set back.

THOMPSON: I imagine your wife was one of the earlier teachers at the Van Nuys Elementary School. Was there a very big enrollment there when she was teaching?

HARDING: I couldn't answer it. I don't suppose there was about 106 kids there.

THOMPSON: Wasn't it integrated?

HARDING: Not too much. Not much to integrate with.

THOMPSON: So there weren't very many mixed Americans in the Valley at that time.

HARDING: Very, very few.

DODSON: Well, they would have been probably out around the town of San Fernando.

HARDING: The Mexicans. That was a Spanish town or Mexican.

DODSON: I imagine you didn't have many blacks living in the Valley at that time.

HARDING: Very, very few.

DODSON: The railroad brought in a few Chinese, didn't it?

HARDING: That was years and years before that. There were more minors in the mountains in Big Bear and places like that and throughout Isabela Lake and places like that, they were brought in and lots of mining work...Chinese. Isabela Lake was not on the map when I was first...there's water from Mulholland that made that lake.

DODSON: Had the water already come into the Valley before you moved here? I think it came in 1913.

HARDING: Through a well.

DODSON: I know that was the earliest form and then the aqueduct was finished in 1913.

HARDING: No, they had a well at first to house the water for the town of Van Nuys when we first moved in there. The well was 500 feet deep and the town of Van Nuys was 500 ft. elevation. The well was just as deep as the elevation of Van Nuys. They pumped that water into the tank. The tank sat there for many years and everybody got there water from the tank. There wasn't any water system in the town.

THOMPSON: Was there electricity and gas?

HARDING: There was electricity, yes, gas.

DODSON: We have talked to some members of the Mulholland family. Bill Mulholland, of course, the one who designed the aqueduct and brought in. It must have been very exciting at the time the water came in because I understand that a lot of people went out to see that water coming down the cascades for the first

time. That's why I wondered if you were here when that happened.

HARDING: Sure. I didn't go up there to see it, but I knew it was coming down though. It still is coming down.

DODSON: Yes. I'm not very good at memorizing speeches but I've been able to memorize Bill Mulholland's speech.

HARDING: Really?

DODSON: Oh yes. I can give the whole speech. Can you Randy?

THOMPSON: He says, "There it is, take it." That's all he said.

DODSON: I think that was one of the most eloquent speeches that I'd ever heard under the circumstances.

HARDING: I was in there when the damn broke and the reservoir up there too. They had a damn...

THOMPSON: The St. Francis damn?

HARDING: Yes. And that's when ? stopped ? It went all through the fields out there after that damn broke to try to find dead bodies in there and that's pretty easy for them to find because if the body laid under

the soil...oh maybe 8, 10, 12 inches all the flies in the country would find it for them. They didn't have to hunt. The flies was the signal that there was a body under there.

DODSON: So that's the way you found them then?

HARDING: That's the way we found them. It was because of the flies.

DODSON: Were you up there the day after the damn broke or did you still have to wait a little while for the water to subside?

HARDING: You couldn't get through there. Sure.

DODSON: I know the water didn't come into this Valley at all. It went into the Santa Clarita Valley, didn't it?

HARDING: Yeah, it went out to the dog's farm. Even though the bodies were still found right close to the town in Oxnard, sand. A funny thing happened. We'd hear things. Years ago Oxnard was not much of a town. ? when the Navy was in there, Oxnard. They could take and lower a bucket into the channel out there. Just a little way out from Oxnard and go down about 400

feet, pull the lid on the bucket and pull up a load of fresh water.

DODSON: Is that right?

HARDING: There was an inland channel that came through there and went right into the ocean right there at that point.

DODSON: So you had salt water on the surface and fresh water...

HARDING: Fresh water...you had to get into the channel to get the water.

DODSON: Do you remember your reactions when you heard about the damn having broken, what you were doing or how the news was spread?

HARDING: We didn't have any reaction at all. It was just one of those things for me. I was connected with it because of the scout troop you see.

DODSON: Nowadays we'd probably hear about something like that over radio or television almost as soon as it happened.

HARDING: That's right.

DODSON: I was wondering how you heard about it. Would you have to wait till the newspapers came out?

HARDING: Well, we had telephone then of course. And we knew lots of people that had friends up there back this side of the damn when it broke. You see the Indian tribe lived on the hillside just below that damn. There was a tribe of Indians that somebody used in moving picture work. They lived up there in that community and they knew that that thing was going out because they moved on two or three days before they went out and nobody said a word to them but they just up and out. There wasn't any of those folks lost in that flood.

THOMPSON: Did they go back to their original site when it over?

HARDING: I don't know whether they did or not. There wasn't any site there when it was over because it took everything with it. By some way they knew it had to go out.

DODSON: Well, if the damn had developed a leak before it went out and they must have known about the leak.

HARDING: It must have something to do about it.

DODSON: We were told by members of the family that Bill Mulholland went up there that afternoon and it was reported to him that the damn was leaking but he said it wasn't in any immediate danger and left. And then of course it collapsed that night. So it hurt his reputation a great deal and the family told me he was never the same man again after that because he blamed himself for the disaster.

Do you remember the feelings of the people toward him yourself?

HARDING: No, I don't. I didn't know there was any feelings against him. I knew he was the instigator of that water system all the way through but I didn't...that's politics.

DODSON: Well, I imagine the feelings was much stronger in the Santa Clarita Valley where people lost their lives than it would be here where the water didn't...

HARDING: There wasn't very many people there in that Valley that lost their lives in the valley. They lost their lives in the current or stream but not in the flood waters. Not in the valley where the flood water came through because it stayed in the channel more or

less. We were pretty well acquainted of that part of the country because my son-in-law's mother lives up there in that district now. She lives in the valley but she married one of the Huntsinger boys. You've heard of the Huntsingers? Well, the Huntsingers had the first turkey ranch in the San Fernando Valley. It was situated pretty close to here some place. The Huntsinger boys had that big turkey ranch out in Bouquet Canyon. They had 150 or 200 acres there of a turkey ranch. Not too long ago they sold that to some big buyer...a business man of some kind. I didn't know ? He bid \$2,000,000 for that piece of property and it just sits there now. He's waiting for development to start up and it will come because it's going right up that way now.

DODSON: Yes, when he subdivides it he'll make a lot more than \$2,000,000 off of it.

HARDING: Sure. Now they sold that and then they went up into Acton. Acton use to be on the ridge route but it isn't on that route now. Bypassed that and went way up around...but they bought land in there and started up another big turkey ranch and they just recently sold that to another subdivider and he's subdividing it into 5 acre lots. Somebody's going to make a lot of money in there if he buys those 5 acre lots.

DODSON: Since we're speaking of prices...

THOMPSON: Long Beach...Van Nuys...lived in Granda Hills for about 15 years.

HARDING: Why, you're just a child.

DODSON: A very precocious one though. Well, we were asking you about how prices were when you first came here. Can you tell us about the price of meat and eggs and that sort of thing that you had been buying?

HARDING: I couldn't tell what it was but it was very very cheap, I know that. I don't think my daughter... Georgene, did you know anything about the prices of meat when you were a young girl.

GEORGENE: I don't remember that far back.

HARDING: They're asking about the prices of things...she did the shopping.

GEORGENE: I know. I remember... Not me, dad. You've got me mixed up with... Yeah, but not then, I wasn't even around. I was telling him was one thing that I really remember about Van Nuys when I was really young was the place on the corner of Friar and Van

Nuys Blvd., I think there's a Big Owl Drugstore there now and J.J. Newberry's. I don't know if Newberry is there anymore. It was on the N.W. corner and there was a great big huge tree planted there and the P.E. car came in there and made a stop. And everybody...all the old men in Van Nuys use to sit to sit around on that bench, around this big tree and it was always fun to rollerskate down there. Everybody use to...all the kids use to go and skate around this big cement place that was there and that was on the corner of Friar and Van Nuys Blvd. That was some 48, 49 years ago at least.

DODSON: P.E. came up Chandler, didn't it? Turned on Van Nuys, went north to Sherman Way and then turned west, was that the way of it?

GEORGENE: No, it went right on up Van Nuys Blvd. All the way to Sepulveda. If it were today, it would go right past Robinson's. You know how it makes the curve. Go right where that island is. That was a railroad track all the way up Sepulveda, clear up to San Fernando. And then if you took the one that went to Canoga Park, it went right past through where the Van Nuys hospital is and went right up that divided park. You know where they planted in the middle, all the

way. Well, that was where the old red car use to go.

HARDING: Called it the old red rattler.

GEORGENE: Right. That's for sure.

DODSON: Most people wish it was back though at the present time I think now during this gas business.

HARDING: I use to sell tickets for that when I was a young fella in Van Nuys. The station was right there at the water pump you know.

THOMPSON: Do you recall the price to take a ride to Los Angeles?

HARDING: \$.40, I think it was for a round trip.

GEORGENE: Was it that much, dad?

HARDING: Yeah, 40 cents. Mrs. Balton was the agency you know. She would want to go on shopping or something and she called me and asked me if I'd take over the place while she was shopping. So I would just sit in there, sell a ticket or two. Just about that.

DODSON: Well, that station has been moved. But it's my understanding that it's been turned into a private home at the present time and so it still exists in Van Nuys but not on Van Nuys Blvd. anymore.

HARDING: I thought it went into a ? a farm or something like that.

THOMPSON: Knotts Berry farm. Maybe the old station in Van Nuys.

DODSON: Yes, it's still in the city because this was brought to my attention that it's been so remodeled that you'd hardly recognize it as a station now but somebody bought it and moved it to another street and turned it into a home. I wonder if what you're thinking about is Knotts Berry Farm is that red barn that belonged to Jim Jeffries. That was moved down there.

GEORGENE: It was on Victory Blvd. You mean Jeffries, the boxer?

DODSON: Yeah.

GEORGENE: That was on Victory Blvd.

DODSON: Yes, now that was moved to Knotts Berry Farm. It's my understanding Burbank wants that back. I don't know whether they've actually gotten it back there or not. I guess they regard it as an historical monument that they'd like to have.

GEORGENE: I use to remember my mother telling me that was a terrible place and don't ever go there because the people that hung out there were really bad and went to watch boxing. That's all I can remember about Jeffrey.

DODSON: I don't imagine boxing was considered too respectable. If we talk about entertainment, do you remember a movie theater that was run by the Greenberg's.

HARDING: Oh sure. ? Greenberg.

DODSON: We've met Sam Greenberg.

HARDING: That's his son.

DODSON: He has a U-Drive place now...in Van Nuys.

GEORGENE: Is that Sam's U-Drive?

DODSON: Yeah, that's Sam Greenberg's.

GEORGENE: You mean he owns all the Sam's U-Drive?

DODSON: But it was my understanding that when the family first came to the valley they had this movie theater. I didn't know whether it was Sam or his father that owns the theater.

HARDING: It could have been either one of them because it was very close knit family.

GEORGENE: What was the name of the market there on the corner of Gilmore and Van Nuys Blvd., dad, that had the tower on the top of it. Tower Market wasn't it? Tower Market that had the red tower up. Yeah, that was really old.

HARDING: Bowlinger was one of the older sites...merchants in Van Nuys as I ever heard of it. Do you know Bowlinger?

DODSON: Yes. We've come across that name. In fact we have an interview with his daughter. I think that's Mrs. Kid? Is the first name Dorothy.

GEORGENE: Dorothy was one of them.

DODSON: Dorothy we've interviewed. That was a grocery store or...

HARDING: A grocery store.

GEORGENE: It was called the Tower Market. In fact the Bank of America was there for a long time. Now they've moved that on up further. I mean the Tower Market was there and it had little drive-in places and then they tore that all down and built the Bank of America. And right there now is some kind of a smoking shop. There was a C.H. Baker and then there was, where you buy kind of hippie clothes and all that kind of stuff. But that was a neat market. I remember they had to have a light on the top of it because the tower was so tall, remember, so airplanes wouldn't fly into it.

DODSON: Do you remember the coming of the First World War to the valley and how you reacted to that?

HARDING: I didn't react very much. Before I was crippled up I didn't have much. I registered. I was the fifth name called. I was pulled out of the kettle back there in Washington but I couldn't go. ? I still have my registration card.

DODSON: Is that right? Do you recall how the people of the valley met the news that we were in war with Germany? What their reaction was?

HARDING: You mean Japan, wasn't it?

DODSON: Well, that would have been the 2nd World War. I was asking you about the first one, which began shortly after you reached the valley.

HARDING: No. I don't have any recollection of that at all.

GEORGENE: I remember you and mom talking about it, secretly. You probably weren't involved so much because as he said, he wasn't able to go.

THOMPSON: Did the Depression affect you a lot though here in the valley.

HARDING: No, both of us are on regular schedule and it didn't effect us. Both on a salary.

GEORGENE: Remember a lot of my mother use to feed everybody that would come to the back door. You know when they use to come and ask if they could work in the yard and make a few pennies or something to get some money. And once you started that people would go

back and say, "There's a place to eat on 14622 Gilmore Street." I can remember many people sitting on our back stoop eating some kind of lunch and doing something like that.

DODSON: Was it your feeling that the valley as a whole was fairly hard hit during that period that there was a lot of unemployment in the valley.

GEORGENE: I don't remember...I remember going out...I remember going with my mother to see Debbie in PA projects because she was the principal of the school and she was involved in a lot of those kind of projects. CCC, camp and things like that. I can remember touring around with her to see all of things, but I can't really remember. I mean because both of my parents were employed and I wasn't...

DODSON: They weren't in trouble as many people were.

GEORGENE: Right. So I don't remember the soup lines and all those kinds of things. They'd be reading about that.

DODSON: Well, it's been my impression from interviewing other people that the valley here wasn't as hard hit as manufacturing sections would have been. Apparently we had so many farms and that sort of thing in the

valley that people could get along better than they did in other parts of the country.

HARDING: Of course my best friend you might say was a fella named Lloyd Gilbert. Did you ever come in contact with Gilbert? He was quite a farmer. He lived east and north of Van Nuys there. He raised watermelons and cantaloupes and stuff like that and use to load them in his wagon and take them down to Los Angeles and sell them in the early days.

GEORGENE: You might get in touch with her. You might write her name down. Eva Gilbert. Because she's 95.

DODSON: Do you happen to know her address?

GEORGENE: Let me see if I can look it up for you.

HARDING: Because they had three children. Kenneth, because he got his education and taught until they retired. He was 65 when they retired. And Harold was the second boy and he ran the corn market down in Los Angeles. You know the big market on Fairfax. He had the corn market down there. He raised corn from all over the country. And then there was a girl in the family and she married a fella that had a fish market. He was a

fisherman who sold fish down in Los Angeles. She's still out there in the valley some place.

DODSON: We mentioned the St. Francis ban. Do you remember the sort of floods they use to have in the valley from too much rain.

HARDING: You couldn't forget that. Life was marooned on the Van Nuys High School, the Van Nuys Grammar School grounds I guess for two days there. I couldn't get home. They lived on Gilmore Street. Two, three blocks the school, water, knee-deep places, hip deep some other places.

GEORGENE: Did you talk to Hazel Harding?

DODSON: We are going to have an interview with her.

GEORGENE: Does Eva live on Magnolia. She doesn't live in Burbank. Yeah, it isn't under Eva. That's why I'm wondering. There's an E.M. but she lives on Magnolia. Harold, how about Harold. Harold or Esther. (TALK RE: ADDRESSES) When are you going to see Hazel Harding?

DODSON: We haven't actually made an appointment but we've been given her name.

GEORGENE: Do you have her telephone number because she's moved.
She's in Pearl Gardens now.

DODSON: Since we just got her name and number this week I
think it will be alright.

GEORGENE: Because she talks to Eva every now and then, that's
why I know she would have her telephone number.

DODSON: Fine, then we can get it from her.

GEORGENE: Talk to the Holloways. (TALK RE: PHONE NUMBERS)

HARDING: She was a big chicken raiser. Bert was his first
name. Bert Holloway.

DODSON: He lives in Van Nuys.

HARDING: He use to, but he's gone now. I had a hard time
connecting.

GEORGENE: Have a seance.

DODSON: So far we haven't tried that.

GEORGENE: You must have books of information.

DODSON: We're collecting quite a bit. We have interviewed I would say about 50 people because we want to preserve all of these recollections of the early days in Van Nuys. And everybody tells us a few things that no one else has told.

GEORGENE: Well, my mother use to drive up Van Nuys Blvd. to work in the morning. You can still hear her telling of that of what is now Panorama City but she use to drive up Van Nuys Blvd. on two ruts in the road to be principal at Pacomia Elementary and it was right up through like a cow pasture really, wasn't it dad? And right up through somebody's ranch. Remember with the cows and everything. It's Panorama City now but it use to be called?? Even I was a little kid I remember going up...

HARDING: Cause she had the balls to be and went to the big bad guys and got them to open that street straight through there.

GEORGENE: To drive straight up Van Nuys Blvd. and it made a curve and it went up Van Nuys Blvd. like that and instead of curving and going to what is Parthenia you went right on up Van Nuys Blvd. and it curved and went right to Pacoima Elementary and that's where she stopped.

HARDING: 40 years.

GEORGENE: It was an old two lane dirt road.

DODSON: She was there for 40 years?

HARDING: She was responsible for that park that's behind the school grounds out there. She sold the powers that be...

GEORGENE: Whitmore...Whitman Park.

DODSON: Well, that's an interesting piece of information. What was your wife's maiden name or rather her first name?

HARDING: Prudence Harding.

DODSON: Well, let's get it on the tape then. She was principal of Pacoima Elementary School.

GEORGENE: Well, she started out at Van Nuys Elementary as acting principal. That's when she had the first Campfire Girls. And then she left there and went to be at Pacoima for 40 years. A long time.

DODSON: Is that particular school still there? The one that she...

HARDING: Well, it's torn down and new school built there. In the same site.

GEORGENE: They just tore it down, what, two or five years ago.

HARDING: She had a fight to keep them to restore the bell that was on there. She was responsible for having the school bell. When they tore the building down they were going to take the bell and they didn't get it.

GEORGENE: And they still ring it every morning for the children to hear to get to school on time, because in those days they didn't have any clocks. Everybody came late to school so they'd ring it at 8:30 then at 9:00 and when the second bell rang, you'd better be in school.

DODSON: So they still have the original bell.

GEORGENE: They still have the original bell, right. So she was a busy lady.

DODSON: How did the various earthquakes that we've had affect you.

HARDING: They didn't effect me at all. I felt them but that's all. They didn't disturb my property or didn't disturb anything that we were doing.

DODSON: You weren't living up here at the time of...

HARDING: No. I was living in Van Nuys when there was a big one. And we were having a little party there at the place and the party was in Long Beach. That's when they had the big one at Long Beach. And the neighbor right next to us on the left side...she was a Swedish girl/woman and she said everybody has always told her to run outside when there was an earthquake. And she said she was in the bathtub taking a bath and didn't know what to do. Mrs. Sutterberg, from Sweden. ?

THOMPSON: Didn't the Van Nuys Elementary School go down in that Long Beach earthquake?

HARDING: The only thing that ever happened to the Van Nuys Elementary School is that they took the top floor...they use to have a dome. You remember that. When they took that dome off of it, it didn't shake the building at all.

THOMPSON: So the same school is still there, minus the dome.

HARDING: We lived on Gilmore Street and that was just opposite of that that crossed the boulevard, 268 Gilmore. We built that home and we lived there for 24 years I believe. 23-24 years and we built one over on Hamlin Street, two blocks from the high school...west/east. We were there for 35 years.

DODSON: What would be the address of that house, do you remember?

HARDING: 264, does that sound right?

DODSON: I would think it would have a larger number than that, a higher number.

HARDING: Do you remember our address on Gilmore Street?

GEORGENE: That was 14622 Gilmore Street.

HARDING: 14622...I didn't remember that.

DODSON: I think you said you built a house on Hamlin Street.

GEORGENE: That was the second one.

HARDING: Well, on Gilmore it was 14622.

THOMPSON: What was the address on the second one, 14655 Hamlin.

HARDING: Yeah, almost opposite of each other. One was on Gilmore and the other one was over on Hamlin on the south side of the street and one was on the north side of the street.

THOMPSON: And that one is still standing?

HARDING: Yeah.

DODSON: We are members of the committee set up by Councilman Bernardi to try to locate historic houses and I don't believe that these houses have to the attention of the committee why we are so interested in them. We were asking about earthquakes. Do you worry about earthquakes in the future? Does the idea of earthquakes bother you?

HARDING: No. When they had the last big one in Van Nuys the only thing that it did to my place there is my wife had that big ball like that sitting on the vase in the front window of the house and that's the only thing that fell off onto the floor. We never lost a dish or a thing out of place.

DODSON: I know apparently in the Sylmar earthquake, the further south you lived in the valley, the less you felt that quake.

HARDING: That's right. My son lived just below the San Fernando reservoir and he was told to get out. He lived on Haskel. Georgene lived here, this daughter lived right here at this place and it shook a lot of glassware out. And there was stuff sitting on the top like this stuff here and it would shake off very easily.

DODSON: We were in house of one lady who wanted to be sure that things on her table weren't shaken off in any future earthquakes. She had cemented them down to the top of the table. She wasn't going to have anymore china broken.

HARDING: Well, they're not too nice to be in but it never did bother me. I am going to be sorry if I didn't feel them.

DODSON: They didn't bother until the Sylmar. That was a little too big of earthquake for me. I have no particular desire to feel...

HARDING: My wife was in that big one in Long Beach, down in Los Angeles, riding along the street and there was big chunks of concrete falling off of the buildings down there onto to the pavement. That was pretty rough, but it didn't bother her, she just walked right along. She was that kind of a type of woman.

DODSON: I see. Well then it really did a great deal of damage down there. One of the amazing things to me...we have discovered people living in the valley in 1906 when they had the San Francisco earthquake and they tell me that earthquake was felt here in the valley. That shows how strong it was and it centered in San Francisco and we felt it down here. You see something you'd especially ask about, Randy?

THOMPSON: I don't know. I think we've covered...

DODSON: Down there under No. 8, there may be some things you'd like to ask about. No? What do you think about fashions in the valley...did they change radically since you first came here?

HARDING: About what?

DODSON: Fashions.

HARDING: It all depends on what season you're talking about. I think they're wearing the same clothes that they did 15-23 years ago. I got a suit in there that I've had about that long and I put it on and wear it out and people don't kid me about it.

DODSON: But you know on men's clothes I don't think the designers can do much. First you have the double breasted coat for a while and then the single breasted so you just keep your double breasted coat for another ten years then it's in style again and then you can wear it. In fact I think the double breasted coats is beginning to come back now after they've been out for a while. I think it's the women's fashions that change mostly.

HARDING: Vests are coming back now too. You use to buy a suit and get a vest with it too but you don't any more. You have to order special.

DODSON: I think you're right. Vests are coming back. I think the radical change is probably in women's clothes rather than men's. Now I imagine your wife would see a great difference between the way the students are dressed now than in her day.

HARDING: And the zoot suiters. Did you know there's a bunch of zoot suiters came into the valley years ago. Did you ever hear about it.

DODSON: Yes, that was about during the 2nd World War.

HARDING: Yes, that's right. And she put ? to that right away. She wanted nothing to do with the zoot suiters.

GEORGENE: They couldn't come to school in a zoot suiter.

HARDING: They couldn't come to school in a zoot suiter and be seen on the street if you belonged to that community.

DODSON: Are you familiar with the zoot suit, Randy? Do you know what it is?

THOMPSON: Vaguely.

DODSON: Can you describe a zoot suit for us?

HARDING: It's very lovely. Flowered pants and coats ? Very long coat.

DODSON: And I think they wore a long watch chain, didn't they? As part of it. Big hat. It wasn't the style

coming at the time so a person wearing one of those would really stand out.

HARDING: Yes, they wanted to stand out. That's why they wore them.

DODSON: And that I think provoked some troubles with our servicemen. That is, they didn't like the zoot suits and the wearers of them. Were there any of those zoot suit riots in the valley that you remember.

HARDING: No, not...that was pretty well taken care of. That was on a big community of zoot suiters was in Pacoima. And she had her thumbs down on zoot suits. Somebody was talking the other day and said, "Oh, that Mrs. Harding is the principal here and she run that school."

DODSON: She didn't have the troubles with outsiders causing trouble at the school and that sort of thing that we have now.

HARDING: Only one old woman who use to come in there and she was jealous because the teachers had a job where they could sit down. She come over there and told my wife one time she said, "You can talk about that all you

want to, but you've got one of those easy sitting down jobs." ? School teacher ? job.

DODSON: Well, I suppose maybe it does seem easy to somebody else.

HARDING: She should have tried it.

DODSON: Do you think there has been many changes in moralities since the...

HARDING: I think there has been a lot of changes in morality.

DODSON: How would you characterize those?

HARDING: Well, that would be pretty hard to do. Through different organizations you might say. You've got your Spanish class and you've got your Negro class and you've got your Japanese people who are coming in here and Chinese people...it's pretty hard to classify those people but they are really in a class by themselves. I would say the Negroes especially. Most of the crimes and bad crimes committed in the City of Los Angeles are colored.

THOMPSON: You were saying when you first came out here there weren't very many black people at all. Do you recall

when they first started moving into the valley, if it through any construction type jobs or something like that?

HARDING: No. They were not in construction like jobs, they were waitresses or people like that came in mostly. Manual labor that I remember. They didn't know how to work, in other words. When they came here they didn't know how to work in other words. They filled most of the manual labor in the valley when I was a young fella here. They were hand laborers. They didn't know how to work. They couldn't work with the people that were doing that work.

DODSON: How do you feel on safety? Do you think the valley was safer to walk around in say at night when you first came here?

HARDING: Oh heaven's yes. We never had a thought of anybody ever getting hurt walking around at night. Now you got to have a bull dog on one side. It's dangerous to be out, especially for women.

THOMPSON: Was there any crime at all in the valley.

HARDING: Not that I ever knew of. I don't believe I ever heard of a crime in the valley. I guess that would be about the first 25 or 30 years.

DODSON: We read quite a bit about robberies than I imagine there were relatively few of those. Burglarized...

HARDING: Very few. We never locked the front door. We lived in that house on Gilmore Street for 23 years and they never did lock the front or the back door. That's how safe it was to live in that neighborhood.

DODSON: How about narcotics. Now, your wife was the school principal...did she ever tell you there were any narcotic problems around their school.

HARDING: There were very little. She kept that corralled too. She knew what was going on. Very little narcotics.

DODSON: What would you say is the most important thing that's happened in the history of valley since you've worked here.

HARDING: The most important thing that's happened in the valley. I suppose it would be transportation. Street car, train and what not. All kinds of transportation.

Transcribed by Blue Ribbon Secretarial Service - January 6, 1999

Interview with George A. Harding
Conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson and Miss Randy Sue Thompson

Conducted on June 26, 1979
TAPE #2

HARDING: It's supposed to be the busiest airport in the country.

THOMPSON: The Van Nuys?

DODSON: Well, I understand it's still very busy with the general aviation.

HARDING: We see the Coast Guard comes in here every night in great big old buses. It's an immense big thing. They can just put the back end of it on, run a truck in there and go ahead and take off. It's a big plane. And they come in at a certain time in the afternoon. They go some place up north, probably Antelope Valley, or out there some place and then a certain time in the evening, they follow Balboa right down through the park which is right off of Balboa down there and they land there and take off in the morning? What they do up there is none of my business, I guess. There's three of them that work this district. That is that they come in there about 5:00, earlier than that, it must be about 4:15.

DODSON: Can you think of anything in the history of the valley since you've been here that you think is regrettable, that was bad, that you wish hadn't happened?

HARDING: Well, of course my connection with the valley has been more or less in the same vicinity for about 25 years. I didn't notice anything at first like that. I was at ? high school for 23 years in the same classroom.

DODSON: What were you teaching?

HARDING: Industrial Arts.

DODSON: Did you ever have any disciplinary problems in your teaching?

HARDING: No. One reason was that I was a big husky guy and we had machinery that they worked with all the time, you see, and they knew when they came into the shop that they had to behave themselves or out they go because they'd get caught in the machinery and we didn't want any accidents. And they towed the mark. The wood shop was right next to me and the same thing happened there. I had a class of girls one time and I was scared to death that they get their hair stuck in the

machinery. It was the nicest class that I ever had in my school. I had one -- I had girls that could do a cetalyne welding better than I could. Do welding jobs and furnace work and stuff like that.

DODSON: You didn't see any difference in aptitude between the boys and the girls in that type of work.

HARDING: No. Girls were very much more interested I would say because they had what they called "home mechanics." And they'd bring in their old electric pieces and we'd be rewiring them and fix them all up like new and they were interested in that kind of thing and they were very busy. They didn't have time for foolishness.

DODSON: You were probably one of the early favors of equal rights then.

HARDING: Well I think so. I didn't show it. It didn't seem to me like that was equal rights. They wanted to come and I was anxious to have them. Because if I didn't take them I had the discipline problems. The teachers that couldn't handle the problems in the subjects in the classroom...well that was the place to shove them...out into the shops.

DODSON: Now, I have to tell you when I was first learning to teach, before I got my degrees, I spent two years teaching in the high school and when I got my first class list, I looked anxiously to count the number of boys and the number of girls...to see if I had enough girls to put one girl between every two boys and try to keep the peace. So that no two boys would be sitting together and of course, in your case you had the machines to keep them busy.

HARDING: Sure, sure. They were anxious to work, those girls were really anxious to go ahead and do something. I had more trouble keeping in projects than I did after they got started doing projects. I had one girl who was a welder. She was a dandy welder. You know that old mess. Could do a better job than I could.

DODSON: Did any of them get jobs like that after they graduated.

HARDING: The girl that did the welding, did, yes. She worked at the telephone company. She works at the telephone company.

DODSON: I didn't whether at that time there would have been enough prejudice against hiring them in that type of work that they could get jobs after...

HARDING: No, I don't think so. Because they were encrypted. They could get a job. Even today, those girls that I had in the shop and I'm going to a graduating class the next Saturday. I was class teacher for a number of years and I just got through with one for a Class of 29. That's a long time ago. Most of those kids now are 60 years old. ? Some of that class, they were tickled to death to come and get to see their old teachers. And they were old. I can't strike a key list ? to save my life.

DODSON: Well, I bet they were surprised to find that you probably were a lot better than some of them were.

HARDING: There was about 130 kids in the class in the two sections. I think there were 31 deaths ?

DODSON: Were there any minority troubles and friction in the valley that you recall.

HARDING: Not to any great extent. Once I remember there was a negro boy come to school there and one of the nicest looking girls in the whole school and she picked up with him and they were going around dating, as a boyfriend. That's the only time that I ever had anything to do with that and it didn't work out.

That's the only one. There's was only one negro in the whole time that I was there...23 years.

DODSON: What was the attitude toward these two dating. That is the white girl and the black boy at the time.

HARDING: Well, they just didn't like him. And his color has a lot to do with it. They couldn't say anything very good about that.

DODSON: How do you stand on busing at the present time?

HARDING: I think they should have busing.

DODSON: You would be in favor of that? You are in favor of that?

HARDING: In favor of busing. These kids are entitled to it. Maybe not the way it's run now but there should be a way of getting those kids on the bus and getting them to school because a lot of them now are miles away from school where they are now. There's kids right up here on this corner that are bused in and go clear over to San Fernando to school. They're on the bus about I guess maybe 30 minutes and they know they did that. Why couldn't the bus come up here and pick them, leave right there on the corner and let them go

to school there. High schools in the valley, right up here on the corner. Why should they take him away from there and take him over to San Fernando? Bus them, integration. I didn't believe in that.

DODSON: I see. So you're not in favor of the present integration scheme. I thought you said you were in favor.

HARDING: No I'm not in favor of integration.

DODSON: I see.

HARDING: It so happens that my father of my son-in-law is pretty well up in the Board of Education stuff. You know he figures out the money that they shell out to the different schools and they have a program for them and he says this busing is terrible. Integration is terrible. He don't like that either. He handles about \$90,000,000 a year. It sounds like a little...

THOMPSON: I was going to ask you what years you taught at Canoga High School?

HARDING: What years? Well, I can't tell you exactly what years we started right straight through. I didn't

change from year to another. I started from 1923 and taught 29 years.

THOMPSON: '52?

DODSON: Yeah, I retired in 1953, so that would be just about right. My wife and I took a trip around the country. I had a house trailer. We hooked it on our Buick and started out and went north to San Francisco and Oregon and Washington and all around through that country and we travelled over 22,000 miles in that house trailer but invariably we'd stop in the country. Stop some place in a town somebody would come up...say to either my wife or I, "Didn't you use to be in Canoga Park?" All scattered around, even down in the south and all over the country. People would come and say, they'd recognize us. Of course, we wouldn't recognize them because there was too many of them.

DODSON: In the teaching business your number of acquaintances does go up by leaps and bounds.

HARDING: It does. I'll say so, yes.

DODSON: I've come across some of my students even in Europe I bet you. Standing on a street corner in Copenhagen

one day when one of my students came walking down the street. You never know where you go.

HARDING: That's true. We drove into a place down in Georgia one time and he says you want to be sure and turn that power down on that faucet over there he says it will blow your hose off. He says just turn it down a little bit so it don't run full blast. I said to him, don't you know when that builds up in the hose that puts pressure when you turn it down as it does when it runs full boat. I don't know that. But that's the case when you get just as much pressure on a half of hose open half way as you do full open.

DODSON: Now you were here when the valley was annexed to Los Angeles.

HARDING: Yeah, remember a lots happened. It was routine as far as I was concerned. There was no difference in...

DODSON: You couldn't see any change at all.

HARDING: I couldn't see any change at all. Even the councilman that we had. We had the same organization here when it was annexed as it was before it was

annexed. You might say they just took over everything.

DODSON: Sometimes we hear about some agitation for the valley to secede from Los Angeles and become an independent city. How do you stand on that?

HARDING: I don't it should. I don't see any reason for it. I can't see how it would be better off. We did everything that anybody else has out there in the valley. I don't see why we should get into a city of our own.

DODSON: Some have argued that the amount of taxes collected from the valley is higher than the cost of the services the valley gets in return and they argue from that point of view.

HARDING: I don't think so.

DODSON: I haven't found so far anybody that I have interviewed that especially wanted that secession from the city.

HARDING: I think that were well off the way we were.

DODSON: Can you think of any other important buildings or historic sites in the valley that we should know about?

HARDING: You've got your missions, you got the theaters, you got the whole mission there in San Fernando. That was there whenever all of us came here. The earthquake knocked that down and they rebuilt that so that it's better than it was before.

DODSON: Do you know of any historic structures in this particular part of the valley other than the mission itself?

HARDING: In this...I wouldn't know. I haven't been there in a year and a half.

DODSON: You'd be more familiar with the Van Nuys.

HARDING: The Van Nuys district.

DODSON: Do you think of anything we haven't mentioned in the Van Nuys district that does date from the early days?

HARDING: Well, did anybody ever say anything about the Robert Morton Organ Factory that was in Van Nuys.

DODSON: In fact we were able to interview some people who had worked in the organ factory.

HARDING: I was going to mention Mr. Carlstad which was the engineer for that organ factory but he's up in San Francisco with his son now. He working along up in...they have a home up in the Baptist church, you know ? He and his wife are walking down the hall one night about three, four weeks ago and she was a little ways a head of him in the hall and she heard a groan and somebody groaned and she looked around and her husband had fallen in that alley way in that tower and broke his hip. Oh my, broke his hip. They got the ambulance and took him to the hospital. They took his leg off at the hip and put in a plastic form right now. So he's up with his son now in Redwood City.

DODSON: I'm sorry to hear that. We had interviewed Mr. Carlstad. This is the first I knew that he had had that injury.

HARDING: Is that so? Now that's Paul, that's the father.

DODSON: The one that lived in that Baptist...

HARDING: Yes. He and I were great pals. We talked together. His room was on one side of the hall and mine was in the other end. In fact, he was responsible for getting me in as a teacher. He was a wonderful architect and he has two sons, three sons. He has Norman. Norman is up in San Francisco in Lockheed. And the other son is out here in the valley. He was the young fella that was in that, you know the fella down there where the offices of the City of Los Angeles. The airplane and the tail end of it went off and it landed right there on the freeway.

THOMPSON: I think I heard about that.

HARDING: Well, that's his son's. He wasn't piloting, he was in training. He got killed. ? just wanted to go and have it fixed up. He said this is not an emergency, it's not a serious operation nowadays.

DODSON: Speaking of the Mortan Organ Company...I believe we have a Morton Organ in the Van Nuys High School.

HARDING: That's right.

DODSON: That was just refurbished a year or so ago and is in operating condition again. For a while it was not but now it is.

HARDING: We have one in Canoga Park High School too. They furnished then in every high school in the valley. Robert Morton Organs.

DODSON: I think that was the first industry in Van Nuys.

HARDING: That's right.

DODSON: And then the coming in of the talking movies I guess was what ruined the organ company.

HARDING: I would think so, sure.

DODSON: Up to that time I guess they'd been building theater organs and then the market for theater organs fell out.

HARDING: It sure did. Well, they're building them bigger and better all the time. You should see some of these big organs that go into the big hotels and a lot around over the country twice as big as those that they put in the ? That was one that they put in the Elk's temple down there in Los Angeles, they had to take the base part off of that thing. Every time they'd strike a note on that it would crack that base note all to pieces in that organ. There was so much vibration.

DODSON: Well, can you tell me of anything that you think of in the history of the valley that we haven't asked about at all that you think we should record.

HARDING: Well, I couldn't answer that.

DODSON: Mr. Harding then took us on a tour of the shop in his backyard. Mr. Harding at present is very much interested in metal work, particularly in the making of knives. You have been listening to an interview with Mr. George A. Harding of 10353 Aldea Street, Granda Hills, CA 91344. The interview was conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson, Curator of the Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum and by Ms. Randy Sue Thompson, the Deputy Curator to Dr. Dodson. The date is June 26, 1979.

END OF TAPE 2

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